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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /030 W
----------032340 180213Z /64
R 171327Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL ZAGREB
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4961
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, YO
SUBJECT: PRESS ATTACK ON DJILAS AND HIS WARTIME MEMOIRS

1. YUGOSLAV DISSIDENT MILOVAN DJILAS' WARTIME MEMOIRS ARE SUBJECT OF STRONG ATTACK IN ZAGREB DAILY "VJESNIK" OF JANUARY 15. COLUMNIST JOZE VLAHOVIC IN HIS SUNDAY COLUMN "A CLEAR VIEW OF THE WORLD" DISMISSES DJILAS' RECENT BOOK "WARTIME" AS "SO-CALLED MEMOIRS . . . FULL OF INSINUATIONS, FALSEHOODS, EVIL GOSSIP, PERFIDIOUS DECEIT, SO-CALLED OFF-COLOR STORIES, AND MATTERS COMPLETELY PERIPHERAL AND IRRELEVANT TO THE ESSENCE OF OUR WAR." VLAHOVIC ACCUSES DJILAS OF BEING TAKEN UNDER WING BY "EVEN THE MOST REACTIONARY FORCES" AND "CHEAPLY SELLING HIS OWN PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE." IN PARTICULAR, DJILAS' ACCOUNT OF HIS PRISONER EXCHANGE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GERMANS IS CITED AS "HEATING UP OLD SLANDERS" THAT BOTH THE PARTISANS AND THE CHETNIKS COLLABORATED WITH THE GERMANS.

2. TURNING TO DJILAS' PERSONALITY, VLAHOVIC PORTRAYS HIM AS A SICK MAN, DRIVEN BY DESTRUCTIVE DESIRES. THE ARTICLE RECOUNTS THE STRANGE STORY OF DJILAS' BEHAVIOR AT A PARTY MEETING IN SARAJEVO BEFORE THE WAR. WHILE HE WAS ADDRESSING THE GATHERING AND CRITICIZING THEIR FAILURES, DJILAS DISASSEMBLED A POCKET WATCH BELONGING TO ONE OF THE MEN. WHEN HE WAS FINISHED, HE WRAPPED THE
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PARTS IN A HANDKERCHIEF AND TOLD THE OWNER TO TAKE IT TO A REPAIR-MAN. VLAHOVIC COMMENTS THAT EVEN THEN IT WAS CLEAR WHAT KIND OF MAN DJILAS WAS. HIS LATEST BOOK, VLAHOVIC ADDS, IS "JUST ONE INDI-CATION, AND PERHAPS NOT THE LAST, OF WHERE A MAN'S SICK DESIRES TO DESTROY, TO TAKE APART, TO TARNISH, TO RUIN EVERNTHING CAN LEAD."

3. VLAHOVIC CONCLUDES THE SECTION OF HIS COLUMN DEALING WITH DJILAS

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BY SAYING THAT SIMILAR ATTACKS ON THE MEMORY OF THE PARTISAN STRUGGLE ARE ALSO TAKING PLACE IN THE SOVIET UNION. ALL THOSE WHO CANNOT ACCEPT YUGOSLAVIA AS SHE IS, HE OBSERVES, FIRST DENY THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LIBERATION WAR.

4. COMMENT: AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THIS IS THE FIRST SUCH COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC ATTACK IN ZAGREB ON DJILAS' NEW BOOK ALTHOUGH IT WAS PUBLISHED LAST AUGUST. THE BOOK IS NOT OPENLY AVAILABLE IN YUGOSLAVIA, BUT YUGOSLAVS ARE AWARE OF ITS EXISTENCE FROM REVIEWS IN THE WESTERN MEDIA, AND SOME YUGOSLAVS RETURNING FROM ABROAD HAVE BROUGHT THE BOOK WITH THEM. THE BOOK HAS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST NOT ONLY AMONG THOSE CRITICAL OF THE PARTY, BUT ALSO THOSE WITHIN PARTY CIRCLES. DJILAS' PORTRAYAL OF THE PARTISAN WAR UNDOUBTEDLY TOUCHED ON A VERY SENSITIVE NERVE. FOR THIRTY YEARS THE PARTY HAS CAMPAIGNED TO PORTRAY THE ROLE OF THE PARTISANS DURING WORLD WAR II AS HAVING LED A POPULAR UPRISING OF ALL YUGOSLAV NATIONAL GROUPS IN A "WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION" AGAINST "THE OCCUPIERS AND THEIR TRAITOROUS ALLIES." FEW WHO WERE ALIVE AT THE TIME REMEMBER IT QUITE THAT WAY. AND NOW, ALONG COMES DJILAS, A ONE TIME RESPECTED PARTY LEADER, INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN THE WAR, WHO TELLS THE STORY NOT SIMPLY OF A POPULAR UPRISING BUT OF A BITTER AND CRUEL CIVIL WAR. DJILAS DESCRIBES THE HARSH REALITY OF VILLAGE AGAINST VILLAGE AND SENSELESS KILLING AND REPRISALS WHICH TITO HIMSELF RECOGNIZED WERE OUT OF HAND BY THE WAR'S END. DJILAS' MEMOIRS, THEN, WILL SERVE FOR MANY YUGOSLAVS TO EVOKE THE MEMORIES OF THE WAR YEARS, MEMORIES WHICH THE PARTY WOULD PREFER
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ALLEGATIONS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, BOOKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ZAGREB00028
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780025-0904
Format: TEL
From: ZAGREB
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780152/aaaabscz.tel
Line Count: 95
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 95bdcfe2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3758884
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESS ATTACK ON DJILAS AND HIS WARTIME MEMOIRS
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, YO, US, (DJILAS, MILOVAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/95bdcfe2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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